

MIDNIGHT
COLLECTOR

Unnumbered story

ヒロイカ物語をこめて
〈番外編〉

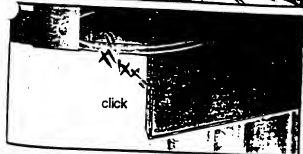
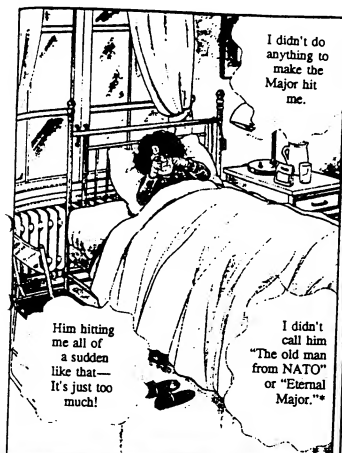
From Eroica
With Love

ミッドナイト
コレクター

by Aoike Yasuko

translated by
Harlem





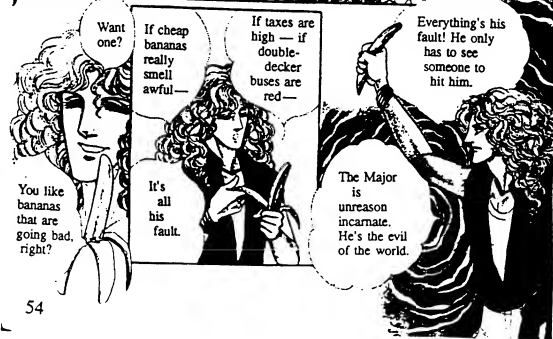


How are
you doing,
Jamesie?
Feeling
better?

Relax.
They're just
cheap artificial
flowers. They
should last
a long time.

Why
should
I be
feeling
okay?

You
show up
here all
perky,
bringing me
bloody
flowers...



To think I
can be won
over with
a Casio
Mini...

Ooh.

click
click
click

What'll I do
in hospital
for a
month?

I bought
you a Casio
Mini with
a game
program.

Thanks to the
Major, you've
been hurt in
body and mind.
I want you to
have a month's
rest.

It's mortifying
that I can
be won over
with rotten
bananas.

They're
just right,
hmm?
Nice and
black?



Doc-
tor
...



You
wa—

Won't you
consider
my request?

If you
could
keep
him
here...

A month?
You must be
joking. He
could leave
here today.



I don't run
a hospital
for fun,
you know.

Fifty
pounds?

Suppose
I pay
fifty
pounds
a day?

Do you
think that's
a fair price?



That's got
nothing
to do
with it.

This is
between
you and
me.

What are
you trying?
I've got a
wife and
kids and a
mistress...





Well,
for
50
pounds
...



Oh...
somehow
I
thought...

That's
okay,
then.

But it's
an unavoi-
dable
expense.

£50 a day
for a room
is a bit
high...



Aaah —
it's to get
James
taken
care of.

My lord!
Surely you
won't...



I hope
it's
okay.

But that
doctor
was expecting
something.



Bonham!
I have my
pride too,
you know.




We'll do
this on a
grand scale,
no expense
spared.

While the
patron saint
of poverty
is away, let's
put the plan
into action.

Don't worry
about trifles.
Get the team
together.

With the
Sungy Bug
and the NATO
man both out
of the way,
we can do
this properly.





*This is a chance
for Eroica, the
magnificent
prince of thieves...*

*to display his
skill to the
utmost!*



However...

Shouldn't you
be leaving
fairly soon?



Sir,
everything's
ready.

But I
hate the
place
where
it is.

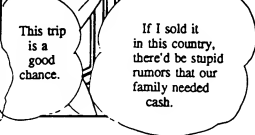
Don't worry.
I'll be at
the NATO
nations'
conference.

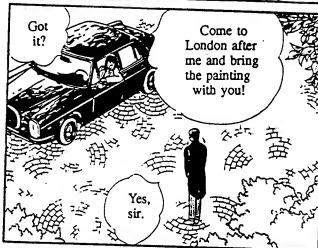
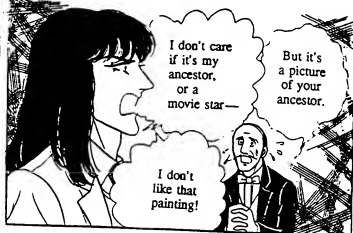
I hate
business
trips that
take
me to
London.

No sir,
nothing
of the
sort.

You trying
to chase
me out
of the
house?

But you'll
be late
for an
important
conference.



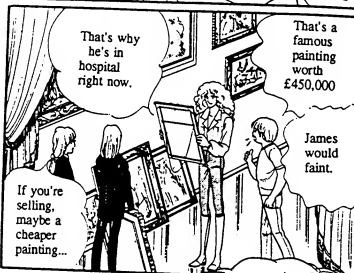


*Even if he hates
that long-haired thief
as much as he does...*



*I wish the master
had a little more
interest in art.*





The picture
of a young
man, shining
like pale,
golden
glass...

Giorgione's
"Young
Shepherd"

I wanted to tell you
earlier, but you'd gone
to West Germany and
weren't at home.

Price
is
dead.

Oh—
so...

It's unusual
that he'd
let go of a
collection
as good as
that one.

Sir Rex Price's
collection is
up for sale
through
England Art.

His adopted son is the
sort of beautiful young
man Price fancied, but he's
a playboy. He'll probably
eat up all his priceless
inheritance.

Has it been
decided who'll
buy the
collection?

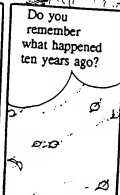
Only
special
customers
are being
told
about it.

It's full
of famous
works, so
the dealers
are going
carefully.

It's his
adopted son
who's selling it.
Lord Price
himself died
last month.



Of course. It was your first job.

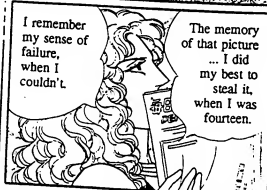


That's why I lost no time telling you about it.

Is the Giorgione one of the pictures for sale?



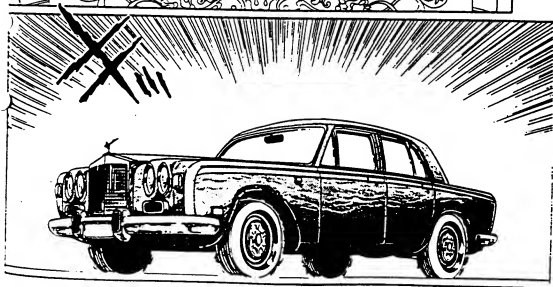
Giorgione's "Young Shepherd"...

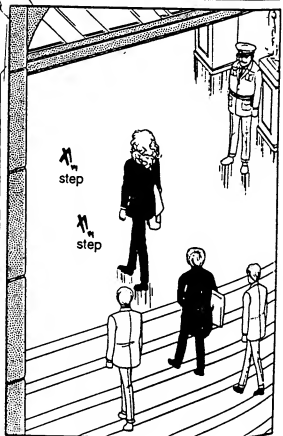
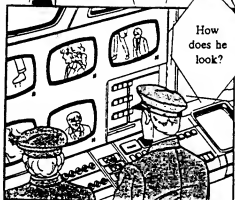
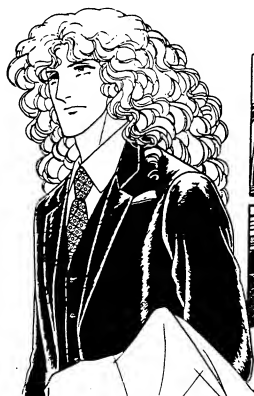


*That young man
was my first love.*



ENGLAND ART







How do you do?

Sorry to keep you waiting, Lord Gloria.

Any of these paintings is famous, worth twenty or thirty thousand pounds.

I'm impressed. Your security seems as good as a gallery's.

We're exactly like a gallery.

I'm Reynolds, the Director.



Here it is.

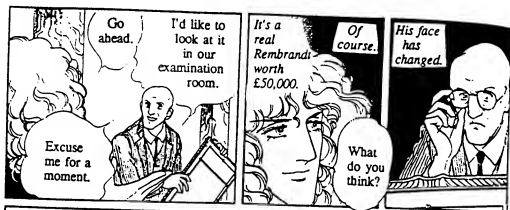
In that case, I can safely entrust my Rembrandt to you.



Naturally we use X-rays and computers,

This is our expert. He's been in the field for fifty years.

but his sharp eyes and long experience are as good as any of those.



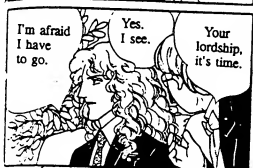


I want something even better than that Rembrandt.

Oh, really.

As for instance, a Rembrandt. It shows you come from a good family.

A painting fit for an aristocrat should have some historical value...

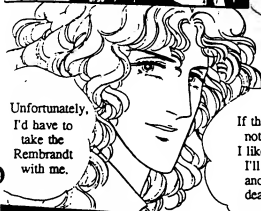


I'm afraid I have to go.

Yes. I see.

Your lordship, it's time.

We don't admire things like modern paintings.



Unfortunately, I'd have to take the Rembrandt with me.

If there's nothing I like here, I'll try another dealer.



I'll leave the painting with you.

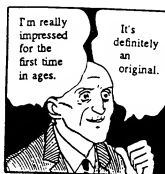
Please try to find me a good painting as soon as possible.



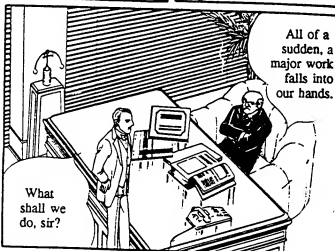
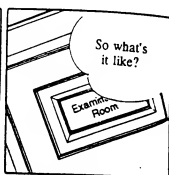
Very well. I'll be in touch with you later.

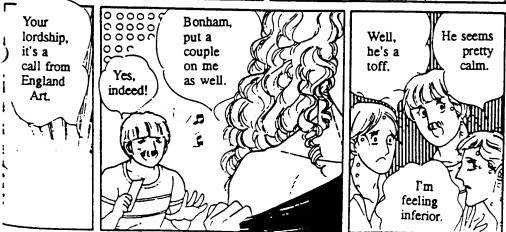
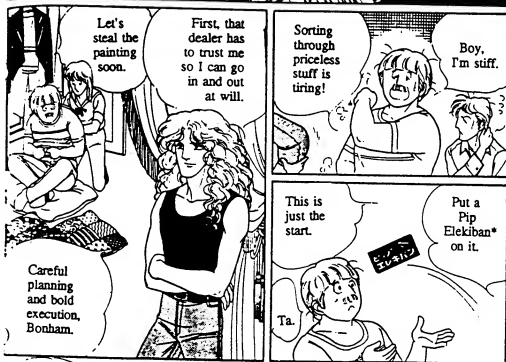
Well, that's the first step taken.





It's definitely an original.





* Small adhesive magnets for loosening up muscle knots.

*He's
heard!*

Your lordship—
Would you be
interested in
Sir Rex Price's
collection?

We're telling only
our special customers
about this collection.

I've heard about
it. Are you the
dealer handling
it?

*I don't have to look
at any catalogue to
remember that
collection. It's
carved in my
memory.*

Tomorrow
I'll send you
a complete
catalogue
of it.

No, I'll come
round. I'd
like to see
it in person.

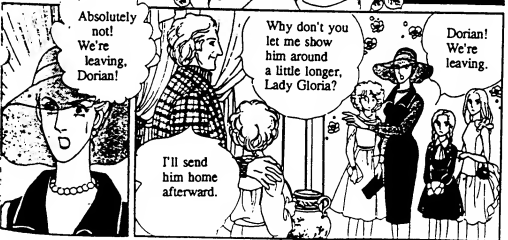
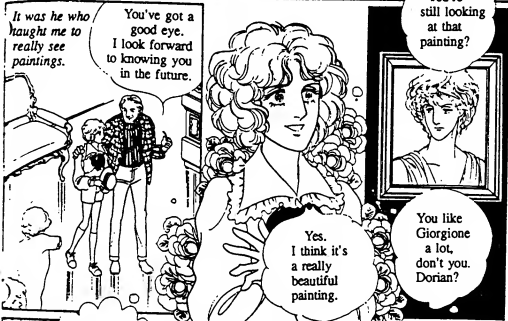
*They think
I'm a
good
customer.*

It'll be a good chance
if you do. Tomorrow
there's an auction of
paintings from
Sotheby's.

*So far,
so good.*

If you're
coming here
anyway, you
might find
some bargains.

*I've
known
it since
I was
a child.*



indignant
silence!



But
Father
also...



Lord Price
was a
homosexual.
He had his
eye on
me, too.



He always has
young men
fawning over
him. It's
disgusting!

Until then, he
suppressed it.
But when he had
a son—an ally
of the same sex
—he let loose.

They're
scary.



Sorry.

Father only began
to show his gay side
after I was born.

Besides artists,
writers, and actors,
there were some
suspicious types
no-one knew anything
about.

I didn't resist
at all. I fitted
myself into
that
atmosphere.



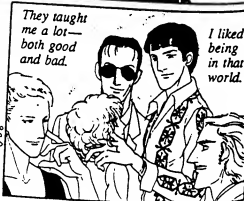
As far back as
I can remember,
Father always
had a train
of male
friends.

They liked to
turn me into
a doll.

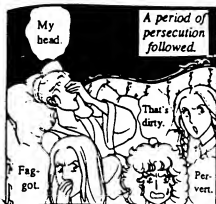


I had a
girlish face.
My sisters
would make
me up.

They taught
me a lot—
both good
and bad.



I liked
being
in that
world.



A period of persecution followed.



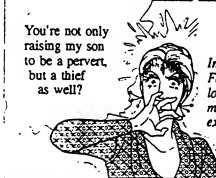
Before long, when the lovely young men ignored them and made me their pet,



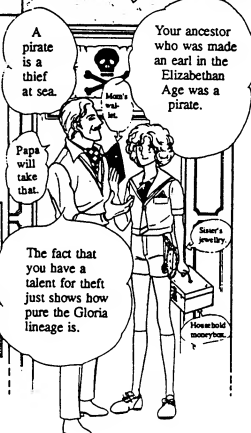
About that time, there was something else I could do as much as I wanted.

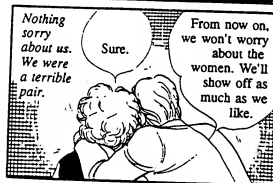
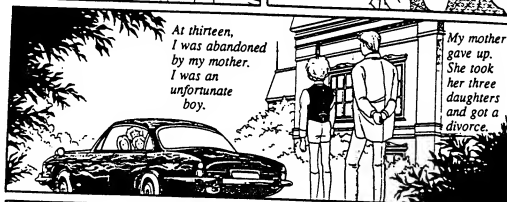
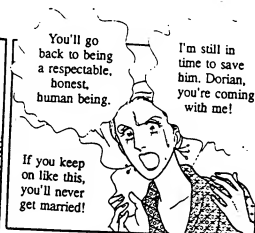
The art of theft.

But I still liked my father's world and adored his works of art. And I fell in love with the young shepherd.

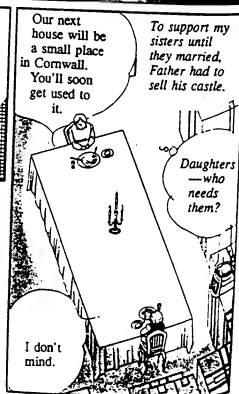


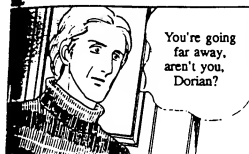
In the end, Father's logic made my mother explode.





My one regret was the Giorgione painting.



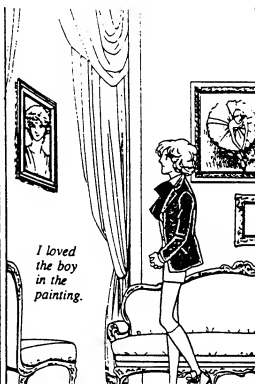


You're going
far away,
aren't you,
Dorian?



Won't you
say that
you'll miss
me,
as well?

I'll miss
this
painting.

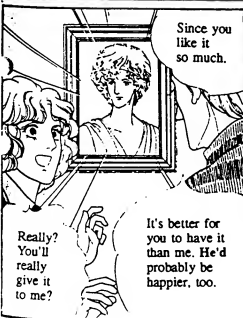


*I loved
the boy
in the
painting.*



I'll miss
you.

when I
think of the
sweet young
boy who
won't come
here again...



Since you
like it
so much.

Really?
You'll
really
give it
to me?

It's better for
you to have it
than me. He'd
probably be
happier, too.



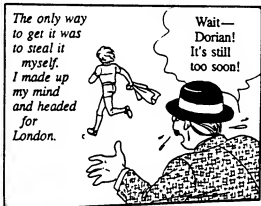
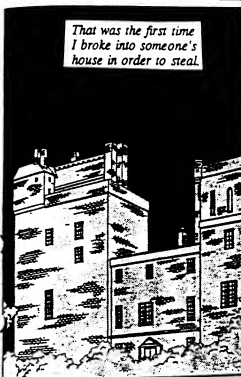
The
paint-
ing...

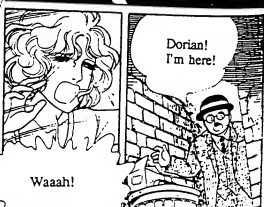
Suppose
I give it
to you,
Dorian?

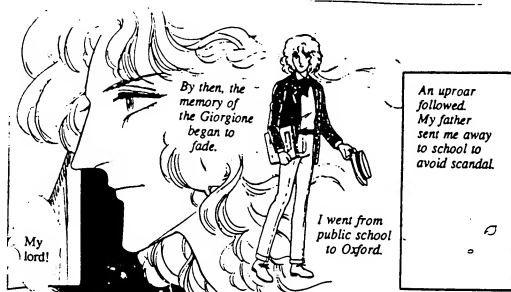


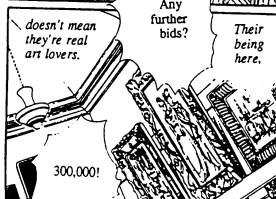
Really
?

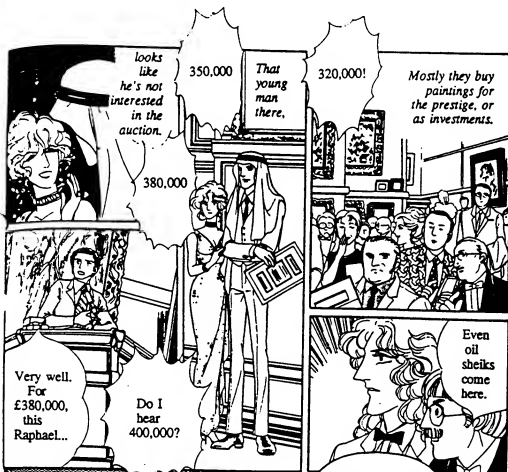


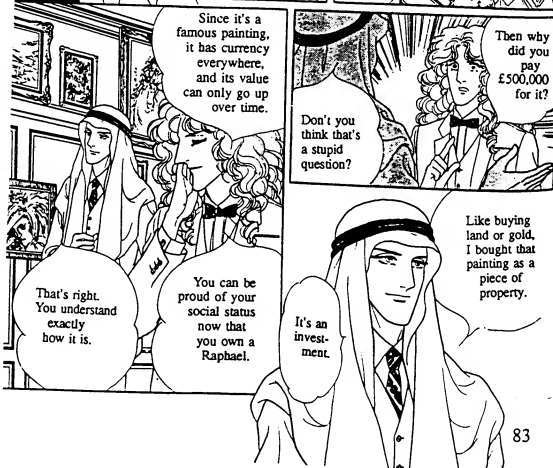
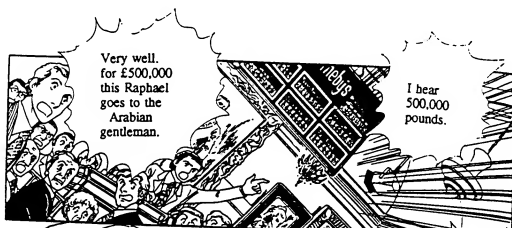


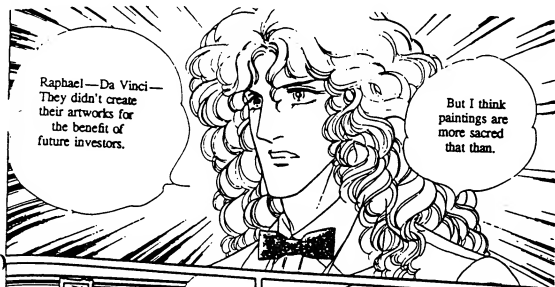






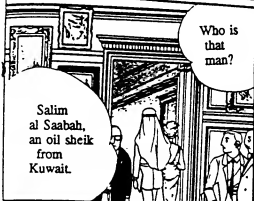




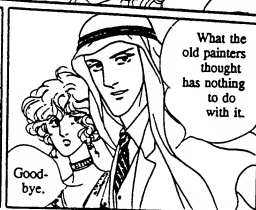


Raphael—Da Vinci—
They didn't create
their artworks for
the benefit of
future investors.

But I think
paintings are
more sacred
than that.



Salim
al Saabah,
an oil sheik
from
Kuwait.



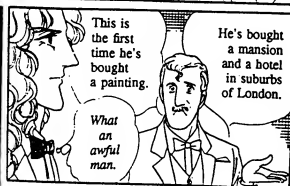
Who is
that
man?

What the
old painters
thought
has nothing
to do
with it.

Good-
bye.



But people who
don't like art
and just buy
it as an
investment—
I hate them!

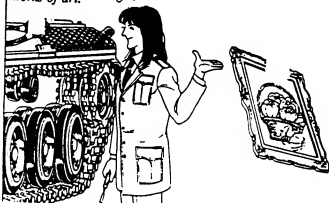


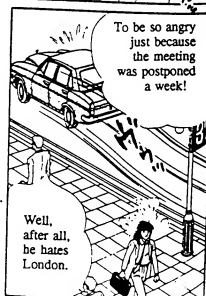
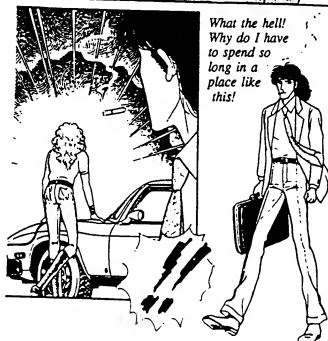
This is
the first
time he's
bought
a painting.

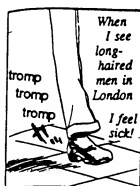
What
an
awful
man.

He's bought
a mansion
and a hotel
in suburbs
of London.

I can forgive someone like the Major who knows
nothing about art. He has his own esthetic
sensibility. It just has nothing to do with
works of art.







When I see long-haired men in London

I feel sick!

Though, I might prefer Eroica's face to that one.

No, it's not...



It's that bastard!



It's another idiot on the scene.

That loud voice...



Major!



You're annoyed that the conference is delayed, I suppose.

I'm sorry to see you.



When I heard you were in London, I rushed over.

Long time, no see. It's Lawrence of the SIS.



Uh?

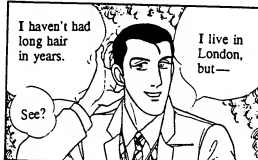
You can take some time off work...

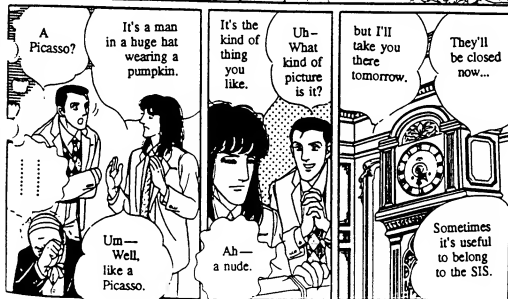
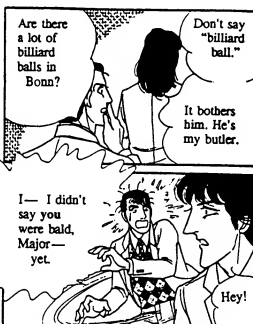


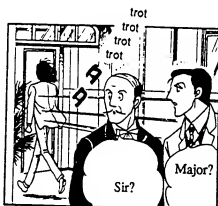
I'll show you some great spots.

Well, this is a good chance.

I'm glad I could see you.

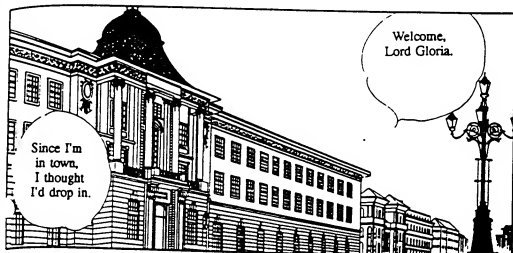






All I can think is that everyone in London is out to drive me crazy.



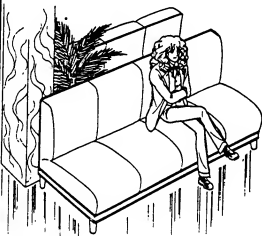


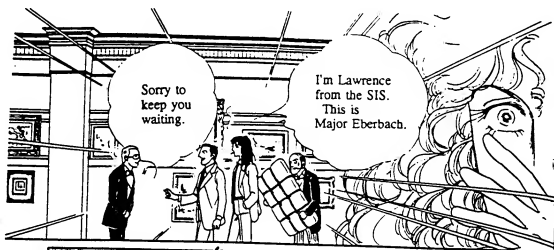
march march march



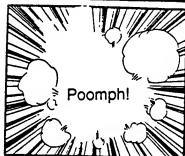
Maybe I should buy James some bananas on the way home.

They trust me completely. It must be because I'll be an important England Art client.





The Major!

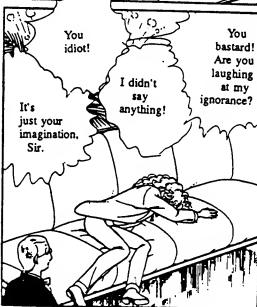
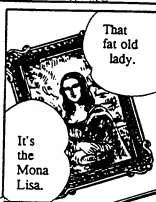
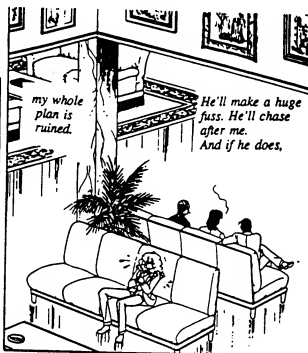
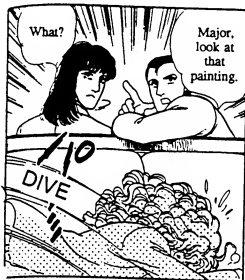


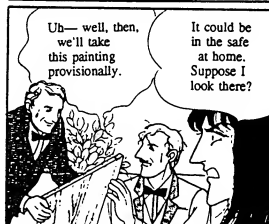
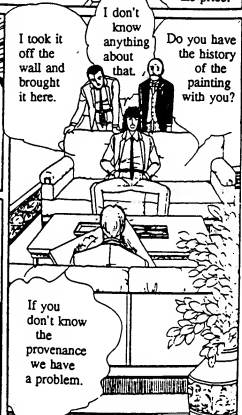
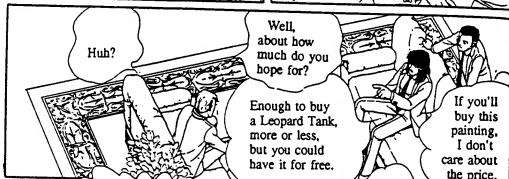
It's
honest-
to-god
the Major!

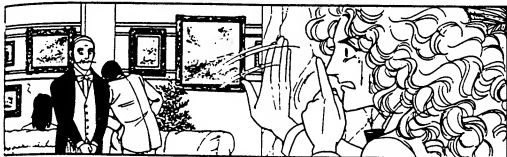


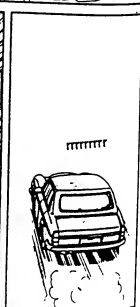
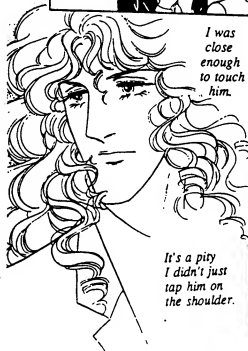
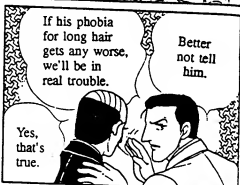
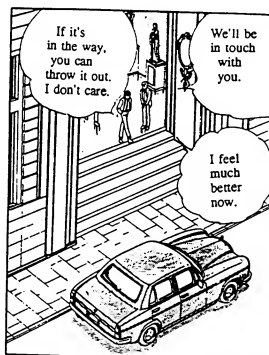
What'll I do?
I can't
run away.

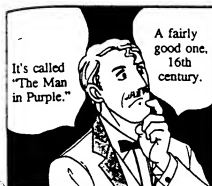


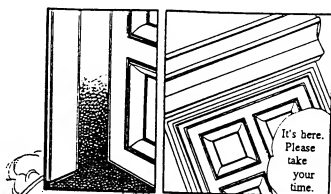












Is his family that hard up for money?



He's selling a valuable painting of his own ancestor.

It's here. Please take your time.

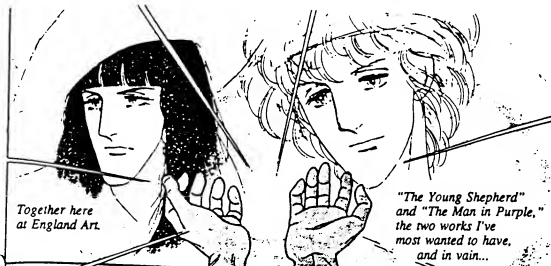
For seeing this painting ... here...



I'd like to give the Major a shower of kisses.

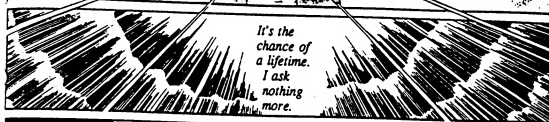


Oh, yes, that's definitely it.

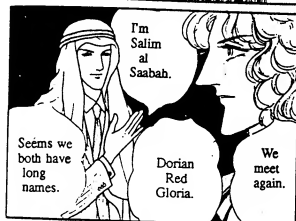


Together here
at England Art.

"The Young Shepherd"
and "The Man in Purple,"
the two works I've
most wanted to have,
and in vain...



It's the
chance of
a lifetime.
I ask
nothing
more.



I'm
Salim
al
Saabah.

Seems we
both have
long names.

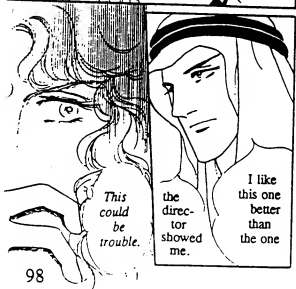
Dorian
Red
Gloria.

We
meet
again.



Oh— so
there's
a really
good
painting
here, too.

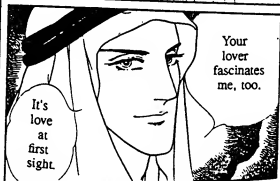
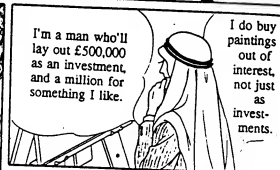
Oh!



This
could
be
trouble.

I like
the direc-
tor
showed
me.

I like
this one
better
than
the one

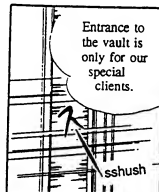


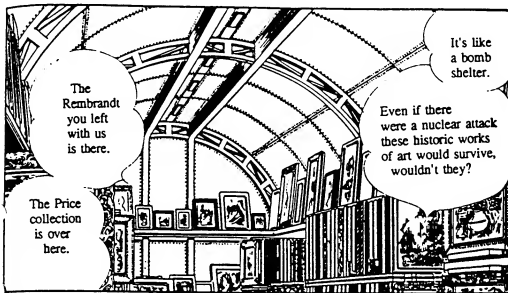


I'll take
you
there.

3 2 9 1 2 3 4

England Art's
vault is in the
subbasement.





The Rembrandt you left with us is there.

The Price collection is over here.

It's like a bomb shelter.

Even if there were a nuclear attack these historic works of art would survive, wouldn't they?



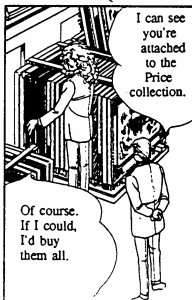
The Giorgione. That pale gold brilliance—still the same as before.



Him!

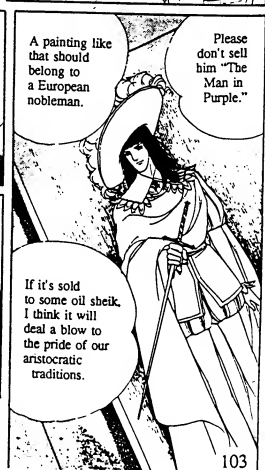
The competition is stiff. There are 500 people bidding for ten works of art.

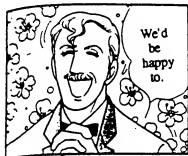
Salim al Saabah is preparing for it in the penthouse of the Ritz Hotel.



I can see you're attached to the Price collection.

Of course. If I could, I'd buy them all.





We'd
be
happy
to.

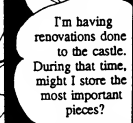


I'll be
in touch
with you
shortly.

My plan
is going
beautifully.



Could I ask
you to look
after part of
my
collection?



I'm having
renovations done
to the castle.
During that time,
might I store the
most important
pieces?



That's the Raphael that
Saabah bought for
500,000 pounds. We're
keeping it for him
until he goes home.

Oh? Can
one use your
vault for
private storage
as well?



What worries
me is the
presence of
that oil
sheik.

Let's go back up.
The president
will be waiting
for us.



With the
stingy bug
and Uncle
NATO both
away

work is
going well.
I'm really
pleased.



It should.
It cost
fifty
pounds.

The bug in the
gold cigarette
case works
perfectly.



This is
our
president.

This is
Lord
Gloria.

It's
very
sensi-
tive.



How long are
you going to
keep on
boo-hooing
back there!

Shut
up!



You're not
going to tell
my father.

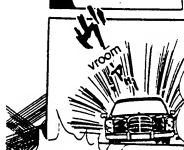
It's a priceless
heirloom of
generations past,
and you just
throw it away.

If your father
knew, think
how distressed
he'd be...



When we get back
to the hotel, you
can crawl into
bed and howl.

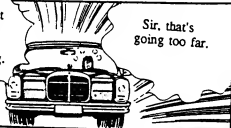
Boy, he
really
loved
that
painting.



vroom

Oh, good.
There's
the hotel.

In that
case,
stop
crying.

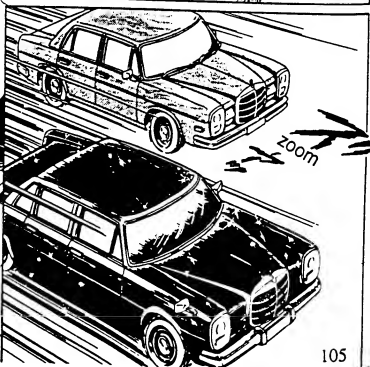


Sir, that's
going too far.

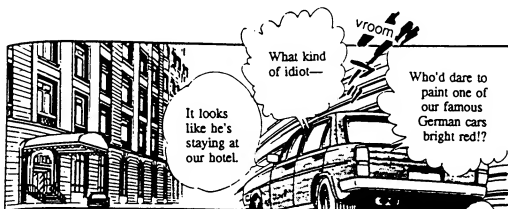


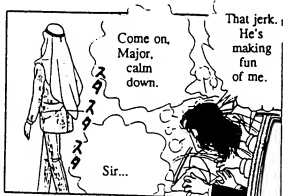
It's a
bright
red
Benz!

What
the—!
That
car?!

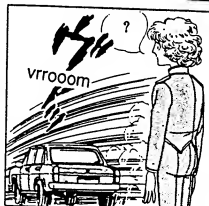


zoom





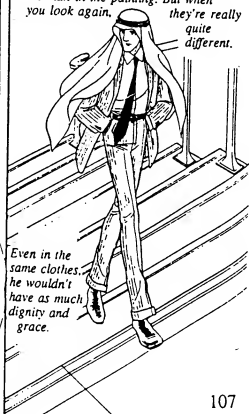
*I hate long hair.
I hate oil sheiks.
I hate red Benzes.
And most of all,
I hate London.*



*Dorian
Red
Gloria.*



*It's surprising. He looks just like
the man in the painting. But when
you look again, they're really
quite different.*






How's it going, people?



We will.

This is a chance to show off your skill. Do your best.



It's our first serious work in a long time, and a bit difficult. After all, they're masterpieces.



My lord, Bakhzian from Beirut is on the line.



What's going on with him? He's been asking questions about you too.

I'd like you to check up on someone for me.

Salim al Saabah. An oil sheik from Kuwait.

What?

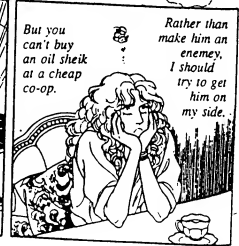
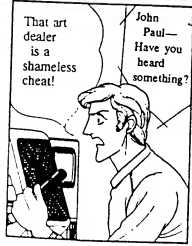
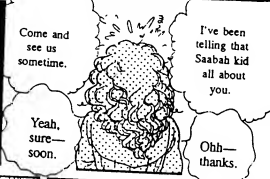
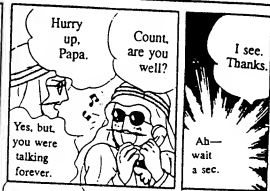
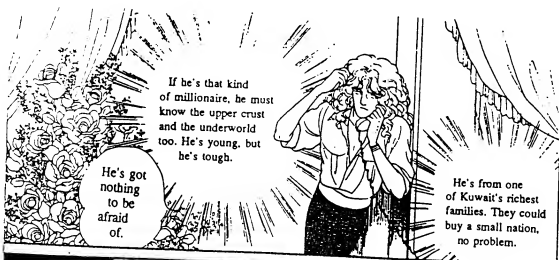
What kind of man is he?

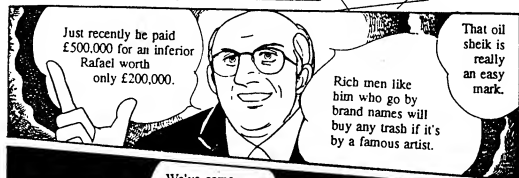
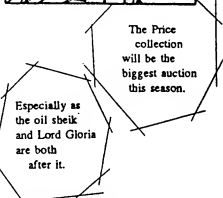
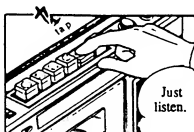


Hey, Count: you okay? I just heard a rumor about you.

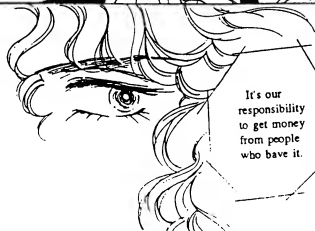
Son, let me talk to him too...

Everything all right?





I might have known.



Ritz Hotel

Just a
minute,
please.

It's
Lord
Gloria.

*Must be that
woman he was
with before,
the one who
looks like
Susan Anton.*

Yes.
Who
is it?

Please
come in.

Welcome,
Lord Gloria.

Good
evening
...

Is this
some kind
of cabaret
club?

What!!



Don't just stand there. Come on in.

Do you like my beautiful reception committee?



Leave us.

Could you ask the beauties to leave for a little?

Thanks very much but...

It's something important.



"Eroica."

So— let's hear this something important.



you'll know my true identity as well.

If you've asked Bakhzian in Beirut about me,

I'm quite well.

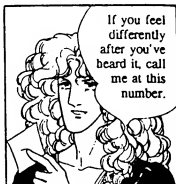


Are you sick?

If it were a bevy of men, I'd be happy, but...

You're the one who's sick— carrying on with that many women.

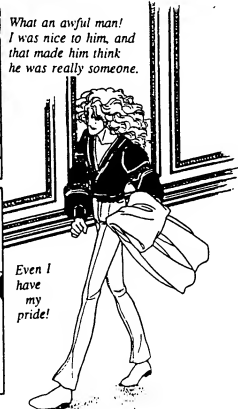




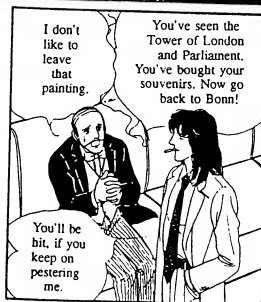
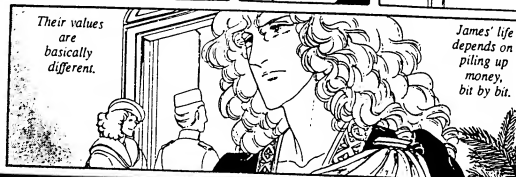
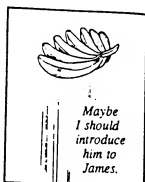
What an awful man! I was nice to him, and that made him think he was really someone.

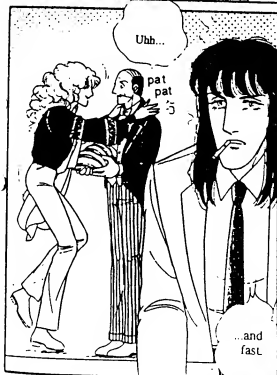


I was sure there were bananas here.



Even I have my pride!





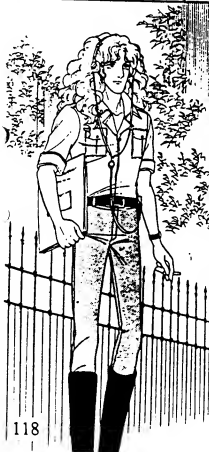


That long-haired—I mean—a young gentleman gave them to me.



It's our
responsibility
to get money
from people
who have it.

We'll do
great
business,
sir.





On the
20th
at
8 pm.

The Price
collection
auction will
be at the
Belmont Club,
in the
third-floor
events room.

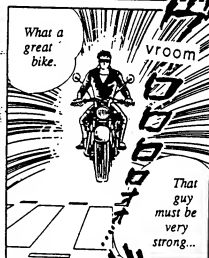
Then
let's
inform
the
customers.

I've spoken
with the
auctioneer.
It's okay.



but the
Arabic
sense of
time...

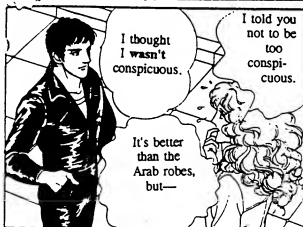
He definitely
said he
would come,



What a
great
bike.

That
guy
must be
very
strong...





A man with
money
and power
and honor.

I'll work with
you to get
revenge on them.
They thought
I was a fool.

But I don't
have money for
art dealers
to exploit.

That pride—
If I tickle
it, I can
get him to
do what
I want.

An eye
for
an eye.

I'd be annoyed
if you stole
the "Man in
Purple"
instead,
afterwards.

Price Collection

No—
Let's
split
them.

Not
half
and
half?

There are ten items
in the collection.
You take six.
I'll take the
other four.

He's pretty
straightforward.

Okay.
Let's
make it
five
each.

You're
going along
with my plan.
I'll give you
that in return.

All
right.

No no

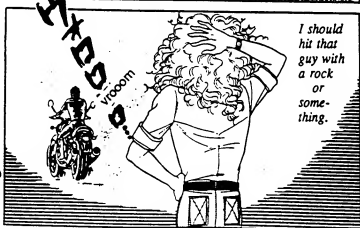
and
this
one,
too.

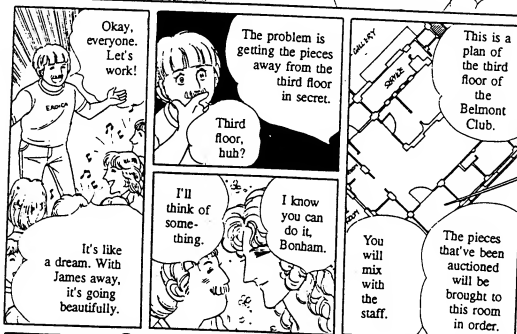
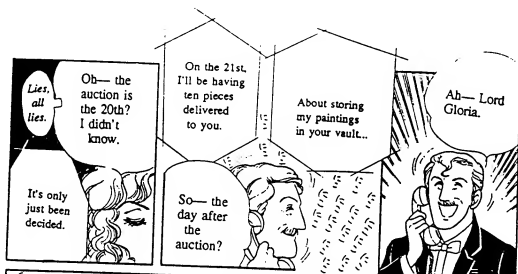
The
ones
I want
are...

this,
and
this,



But he's got money.
I can't afford to be angry.





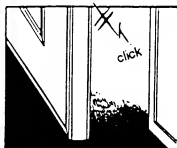


Ten years ago, I didn't think it would ever be of any use.



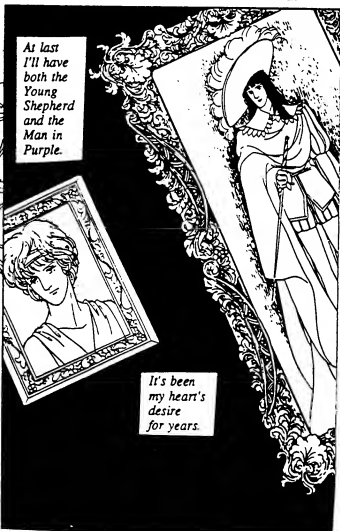
The Young Shepherd, who stole my heart when I was fourteen.

Even though it was a forgery, I couldn't just throw it away.



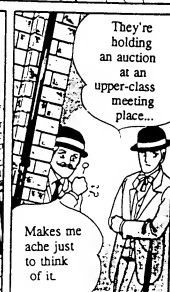
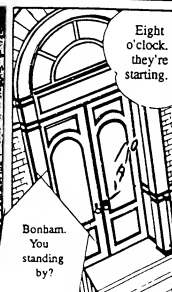
The oil sheik can get what he wants by flashing a roll of bills.

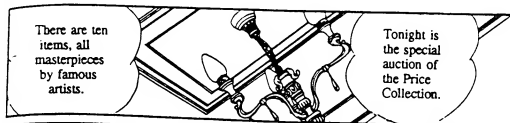
I'll get it by using my brains and my art.

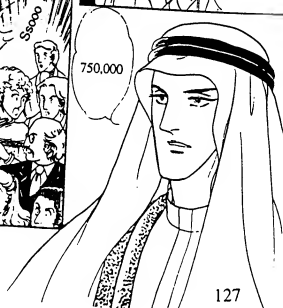
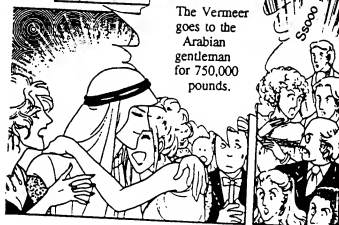
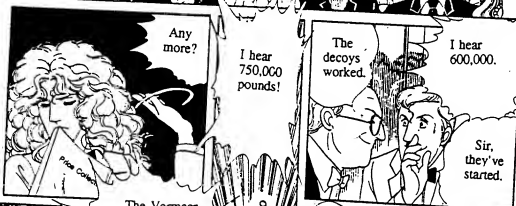
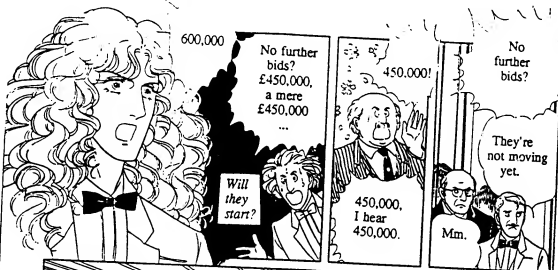


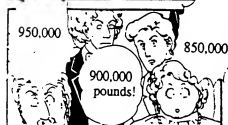
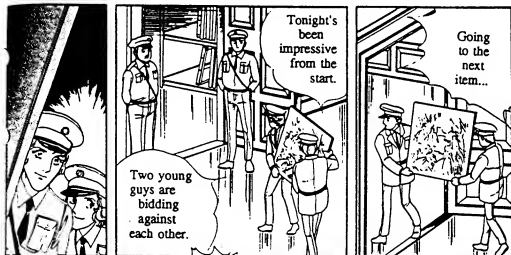
At last I'll have both the Young Shepherd and the Man in Purple.

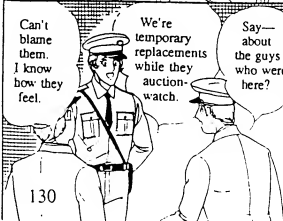
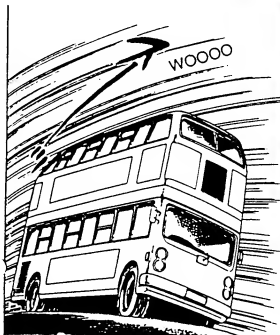
It's been my heart's desire for years.

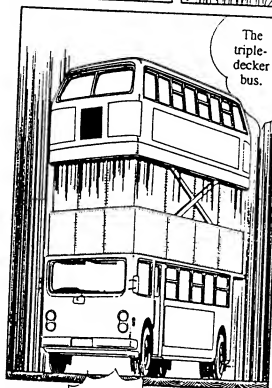
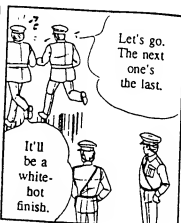


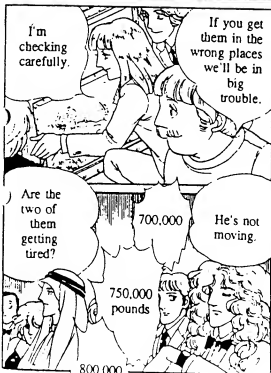
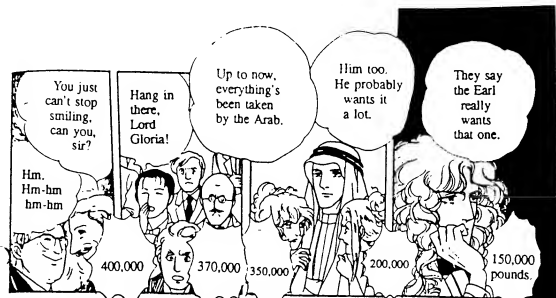


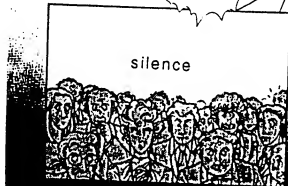
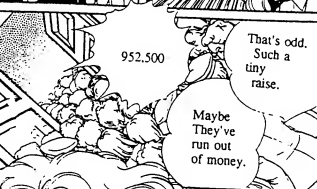
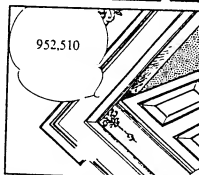
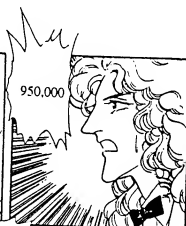


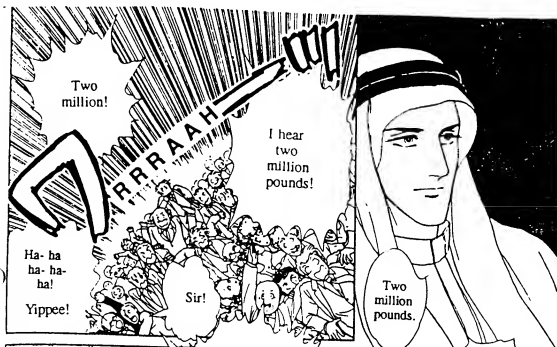






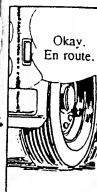




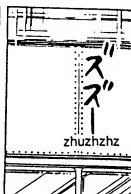




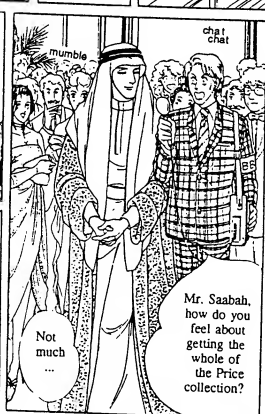
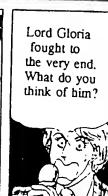
Thanks
ever so!



Okay.
En route.



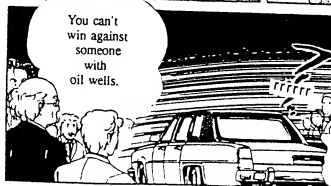
Lord Gloria
fought to
the very end.
What do you
think of him?



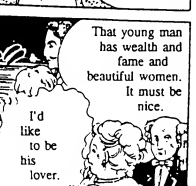
I've no
interest
in men.

Not
much
...

Mr. Saabah,
how do you
feel about
getting the
whole of
the Price
collection?

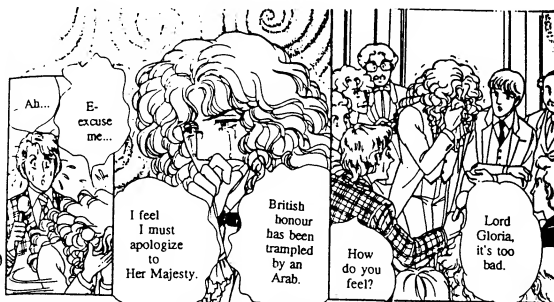


You can't
win against
someone
with
oil wells.



That young man
has wealth and
fame and
beautiful women.
It must be
nice.

I'd
like
to be
his
lover.





But I'll
be the
one who
gets the
last
laugh.

You don't
want the police
to catch you
before you
steal "The Man
in Purple."

Scotland
Yard is a lot
better than
the Italian
police!

There's
no chance
you'll
betray
me.

Okay.
Let's meet
tomorrow
at
England
Art.

I don't want
you as an
enemy
either,
Saalim.

I've
joined
up with
one
tough
guy.



You just
can't stop
laughing,
can you, sir?

Ha ha ha ha
ha ha ha ha
ha ha ha



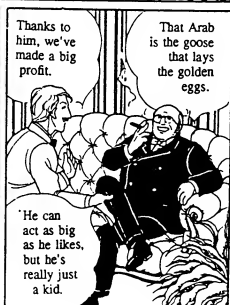
Sir—
sir—

It's—
it's
terrible!



He said he'd
send his cheque
to the office
first thing in
the morning.

Until then
the paintings
stay in the
vault.



Thanks to
him, we've
made a big
profit.

'He can
act as big
as he likes,
but he's
really just
a kid.

That Arab
is the goose
that lays
the golden
eggs.

The Price collection—all the paintings—they've been stolen!

They've been stolen.



Don't call the police yet.

There's no sign that he tossed them out a window.

But how did he manage to carry ten paintings away?

The thief took advantage of all the noise to break in.

If the public hears this, our credibility will be compromised.

We think he hid them somewhere in the building and then left.

There were guards at all the building's doors.



Start looking! Search every corner of the building!

The Price collection has got to be here somewhere!



But—Mr. Saabah ...

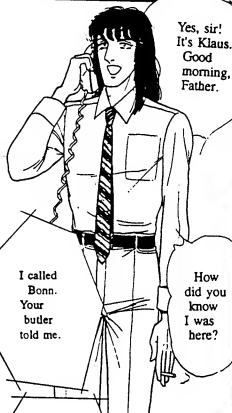
Until the collection shows up, we've got to play for time!

Don't say anything! Just put him off!



Today's cigarette tastes especially good.

It's foggy outside—but there's sun in my heart!



Yes, sir! It's Klaus. Good morning, Father.



That stupid, long conference is finally over.

Tonight I go home.



Hey—That Klaus? It's me.

Major Eberbach? Call from Switzerland.

I don't know someone named "Me."

Some old man—pretty damned casual.

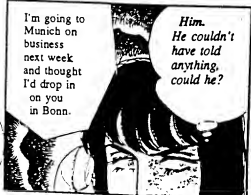
You treating me like an old man?



Please don't put yourself out, sir.

Damn right I am—because you are.

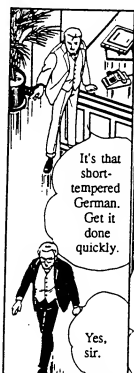
Long trips are bad for your health.



I'm going to Munich on business next week and thought I'd drop in on you in Bonn.

Him. He couldn't have told anything, could he?





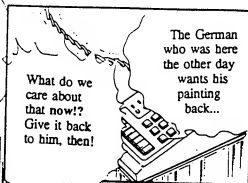
It's that short-tempered German. Get it done quickly.

Yes, sir.



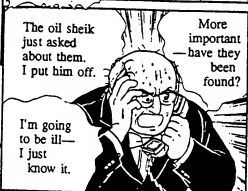
I'll be there in fifteen minutes.

I'm taking it back to Germany, so see it's wrapped up well.



What do we care about that now!? Give it back to him, then!

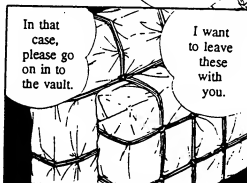
The German who was here the other day wants his painting back...



The oil sheik just asked about them. I put him off.

More important—have they been found?

I'm going to be ill—I just know it.



In that case, please go on in to the vault.

I want to leave these with you.

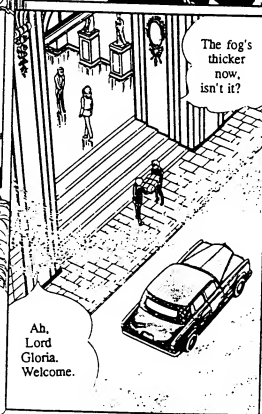


It was, wasn't it?

Ahh ...

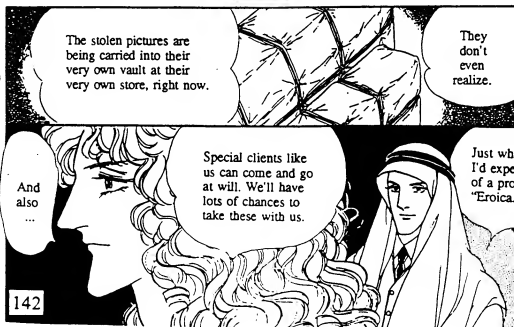
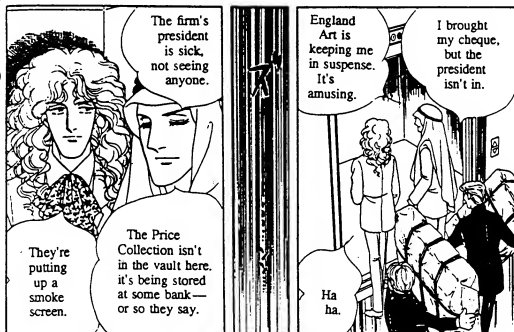
Yes.

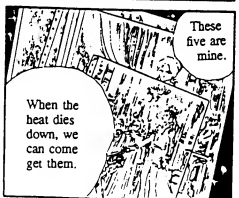
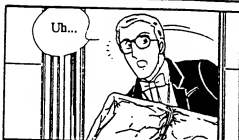
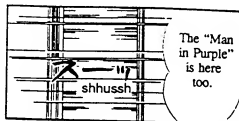
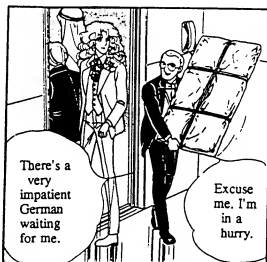
It was too bad about the Price collection.



The fog's thicker now, isn't it?

Ah, Lord Gloria. Welcome.







It's
got to
be
here.

Before,
it was
right
there...



We can't
find it
anywhere.

Your
lordship,
it's not
here!



What
the—



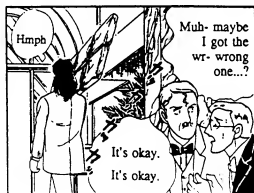
You—
Did
Major
Eberbach
...?

He left
just now
with the
painting.



You're sure
it's the
pumpkin
picture?

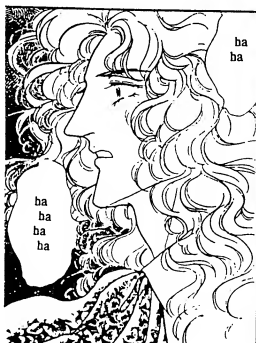
Yes,
sir.

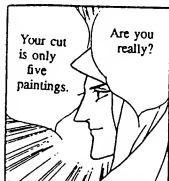
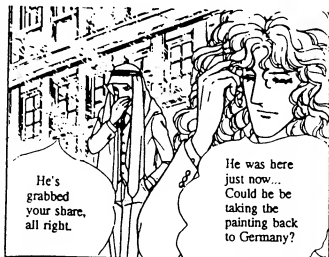


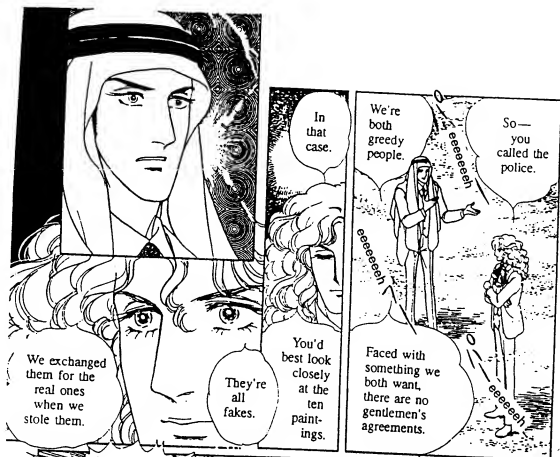
Hmph

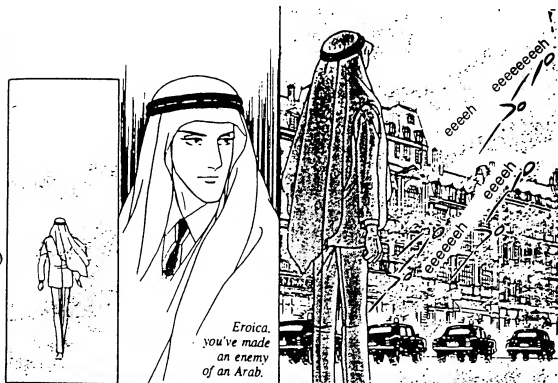
Muh- maybe
I got the
wr- wrong
one...?

It's okay.
It's okay.









You spilled
the beans
to the old
man, you
bastard,
right?



The one who gets the last
laugh is probably the Major
—who doesn't know a thing.



